

Tales and Sketches.

AT THE REFUGE.

No, dear, I cannot be merry, my heart is heavy to-night ;
I've been to the Refuge, Charlie, and seen such a woeful sight :
A sight that will haunt my dreams, dear, and many a waking hour,
And oh ! I have had to listen to such words of scathing power
From lips that were pale with the pallor and dry with the drought of
death—

Words rather gasped than spoken, faint with the failing breath,
Words in my heart that will echo for many a day to come,
When the voice that so feebly spoke them, in the silence of death is dumb.
Of course you remember Alice, the neat little parlour-maid
We brought with us here to Alcolton, so innocent, mild, and staid.
So pretty too, ah, too pretty, for one in her humble sphere.
My fears were too well grounded, her beauty has cost her dear.
You remember the way she left us, I cannot forget that night
When she came not, and anxious waiting deepened at length to fright,
When morning brought no tidings, though every means in vain
We tried, as you know, no trace of the missing one could we gain ;
From that Sunday night when she left us no word heard I ever more
Of the lost girl, truly mourned for, till to-day at the Refuge door,
Yes, 'twas she, little Alice Moran, so innocent once and gay,
I saw to the Refuge brought from the county gaol to-day.
As I came to the door I saw the prison van standing there,
And a feeble old woman, as I thought, helped out with cautious care.
It was dear Mrs. Stanley brought her ; I hastened to lend my aid,
Between us we managed to get her on the Board-room sofa laid.
I thought she was dying surely as I looked on the haggard face,
So wan and drawn, that of beauty or youth retained no trace.
It pained me to see the suffering of any one brought so low,
Though that I had ever seen her, I did not, I could not know ;
But she knew me, and 'twas seeing me suddenly, unprepared,
That the spark of life from the feeble frame had so nearly scared,
For at last she revived a little, and to thank us the poor thing tried,
But the weak words were choked with sobbing as like a child she cried,
Then who she was, when she told me, I could not believe at first—
"No wonder," she said—no wonder indeed, for the thing accursed
Had murdered another victim, had ruined just one life more.
It was only the common story, told often and often before ;
Vanity, company-keeping, dress, drinking, temptation, fall,
Desertion, starvation, the streets, and the prison ending all.
"And oh, ma'am," she gasped, as she whispered with pain and heart-
rending tale,

"The first drop of drink that I tasted was where you sent me for ale ;
Mister Perry himself, the owner of that handsome corner shop,
With 'Licensed to sell' above it, first pressed me to try a drop
Of cherry brandy one cold day, he said 'just to make me warm,
A drop on a lump of sugar, that much could do no harm.'
I tasted it, liked it, loved it soon with a burning crave,
And spent on it every penny that from my dress I could save.
You remember, ma'am, how untidy, how careless and dull I grew,
What trouble I often caused you—the reason you little knew ;
How I used to dress out in the evening, so slovenly all the day,
And when you sent me on errands how long I would be away !
But most on the Sunday evenings, when so kindly you sent me out
'For a walk'—oh, those Sunday outings, what ruin they bring about !
Oh, ma'am, 'tis the spirit-grocers and the Sunday cake-shop treats
That bring so many a girl like me to be walking the streets !
More harm is done on God's day, ma'am, than in all the rest of the week.
Oh ! well, too well I know it—from bitter experience I speak."
Then she told me her own sad story. I listened with face that burned
And heart that ached as she told me it was in my house she learned
To love that which caused her ruin, the ruin of body and soul ;
And I vowed as I listened that none over whom I possessed control
Should on errand of mine ever enter a shop where strong drink is sold.
And that is not all, dear Charlie, there is something else to be told.
I made poor Alice a promise—a solemn promise—to-day
That I would become an abstainer—I'm sure, dear, you won't say nay ;
I said I would sign the pledge for the tempted weak one's sake,
And to show I'm in thorough earnest the blue ribbon I mean to take.

ABSTINENTIA, in Temperance Record.

EVA.—A TRUE STORY.

BY MRS. E. J. RICHMOND.

So, Kate, you are bound to marry the handsome young fellow who has
been haunting you of late ? Dare you ?"

"What do you mean, Eva Weller ?"

"Will you marry Sternberge ? Dare you ? Do you understand me
now ?"

"Yes, Eva, I will and I shall. Do you comprehend that ?"

"Yes, darling ; but—but—"

"But what ? you provoking little tease."

"I am afraid for you, my Kate, I love you so ; and if any evil should
come to you, it would break my heart."

"What harm can come from my marrying the man I love ?"

"I am afraid that he loves wine better than he does you, Katie."

"Nonsense," said Kate, though the flush on her cheek deepened. "And
I had come over this very morning to ask you to be my bridesmaid. I am
to be married next week, Eva. And I love Hermann so much, that I
would marry him if he were blind, a cripple, or a drunkard in the ditch."
And her dark eyes flashed with a fire that said plainer than words, "The
die is cast."

Eva sighed as she answered, "Of course I will be your bridesmaid, my
Kate. Nothing shall ever disturb our friendship."

"And Hermann wants Max Reifenberg for groomsman. Has my Eva
anything to say against this ?"

"No, Kate ; children should be allowed to have their own way at this
one important period," said Eva, with a vivid blush.

"The wedding day was a cloudless one. Sunshine and flowers bright-
ened it, and Eva forgot her fears in the devotion of her handsome attend-
ant. Indeed more than one of the guests whispered, "We shall have an-
other wedding soon, see."

And for once the gossips were correct. Six months later, Eva Weller
gave her hand to him who already had stolen her heart. Max Reifenberg
was young, handsome, with a noble form and a snug little fortune.

Eva was a beauty ; everybody admitted this ; but her beauty was not
her greatest charm. There was an indescribable grace about her that en-
thrilled you, while the spirit that flashed from her beautiful eyes said plain-
er than words, "I am not to be trifled with." There was a flash in this
spirit when her handsome young husband came in a few weeks after his
marriage and said :

"I have bought a fine hotel property with my money, Eva. We will
make money hand over hand, and you shall ride in your carriage, my dear."

Eva's only answer was : "Oh, Max, how could you ?"

"What do you mean ?" he asked.

"I mean that I had not dreamed of my home being fixed in such a
place, Max—a place where drunkards are made and men are fitted for all
sorts of crimes."

"What has come over you, puss ? I never drink liquor, you know, and
I will only sell to those who can control themselves," he answered.

"How long will this last ?" she said, under her breath. Aloud she
said : "I will try and do the best I can, Max," but there was a sorrowful
quiver in her voice.

He kissed the rosy, dimpled face as he said :

"My own dear wife, I will never do anything to grieve you."

Vain promise ! The first few years of hotel keeping were prosperous.
Money came in plentifully. A beautiful little son came into the hotel home.
Eva Reifenberg was a model landlady. Her home was so neatly kept, her
table so richly spread, that the Reifenberg House was the most respectable
hotel in the country. But gradually a change came over the scene. Bills
were sometimes presented, and no cash was ready to meet them. Max
Reifenberg began to carry a red face and his breath to smell of whisky.

Eva suffered on in silence for a while, till she heard her little boy lisping
profane oaths, which he had caught in the barroom. Then she spoke.

"You are not doing well in your business, Max ?"

"I am running behind a little," and here came in an oath.

"Your breath smells of whisky," his wife replied.

"Yes, wifey. The boys taunt me for not drinking my own liquors.
That will never do, you know."

"And Rupert is learning the barroom slang and profanity. We must
get out of this, Max. I can stand it no longer."

"What ? and lose all my property ! I can't begin to save what I put
in here, Eva," he answered with energy.

"I shall be glad to get out alive and whole. Let the place go," Eva
answered. "Think of poor Kate. Her husband is a drunkard and she
has five little children. He has mortgaged her beautiful home, and she
takes in washing to try to redeem it. Think of that."

"Don't get excited, my dear," Max answered coolly.

Mrs. Reifenberg drew up her queenly form. She was a grand-looking
woman, and Max thought he had never seen her so beautiful as now.

"You loved me once, Max," she said. "Now you must choose be-
tween whisky and your wife. You can't have both. I will give you one
week to decide." Then she went away to her busy tasks again.

"She can't be in earnest said Max ; and he took a glass of whisky to cheer
his drooping spirits. He did this day after day. Eva looked him calmly
in the face. She knew all, but said nothing.

One week later Max found on her dressing-table this note :

"Farewell my once-loved husband. If you should ever come to the
conclusion that you have made an unwise choice, it may not be too late."

And she was gone, she and the little flaxen-haired Rupert. Only two
Irish girls were left in the great house, from which the light and sunshine
seemed to have fled forever.

Max raved and tore his hair, but he did not drink any more whisky.

"It had cost me my wife and boy," he said, and a few days later he
found that the thousands invested in the fine hotel property returned only
hundreds. For he sold the hotel, which was henceforth hateful to him,
and bought a pretty cottage in his wife's native village.